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# SDNY Acting U.S. Attorney Resigns Over Order to Drop Adams Charges

**Tyler McBrien**

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*Manhattan's top prosecutor resigned after refusing a Justice Department order to drop corruption charges against Mayor Eric Adams.*

In a letter dated Feb. 13, Acting Deputy Attorney General Emil Bove accepted the resignation of Acting U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York Danielle Sassoon, who had taken the oath of office three weeks prior.

On Feb. 10, Bove sent a Justice Department memo to Sassoon with the subject line, "Dismissal Without Prejudice of Prosecution of Mayor Eric Adams," directing her, as authorized by Attorney General Pam Bondi, "to dismiss the pending charges in United States v. Adams, No. 24 Cr. 556 (SDNY) as soon as is practicable," subject to the condition that Adams must agree in writing to dismissal without prejudice, among other provisions.

The Feb. 10 memo states that the Justice Department "reached this conclusion without assessing the strength of the evidence or the legal theories on which the case is based." Rather, it made this determination for two reasons—improper timing and a diversion of resources away from "illegal immigration and violent crime"—which are "distinct from the weaponization problems." On the first, Bove writes that "the timing of the charges and more recent public actions by the former U.S. Attorney responsible for initiating the case have threatened the integrity of the proceedings" and "improperly interfered with Mayor Adams' campaign in the 2025 mayoral election." For the second reason, the memo claims that "the pending prosecution has unduly restricted Mayor Adams' ability to devote full attention and resources to the illegal immigration and violent crime that escalated" under the Biden administration.

Two days later, on Feb. 12, Sassoon wrote a letter to Bondi about Bove's memo, which the acting U.S. attorney said directs her "to dismiss an indictment returned by a duly constituted grand jury for reasons having nothing to do with the strength of the case," and which "raises serious concerns that render the contemplated

dismissal inconsistent with my ability and duty to prosecute federal crimes without fear or favor and to advance good-faith arguments before the courts." In the letter, Sassoon argued that the government does not have a valid basis to seek dismissal and that Adams's consent will not aid the Justice Department's arguments. She continued:

> Because the law does not support a dismissal, and because I am confident that Adams has committed the crimes with which he is charged, I cannot agree to seek a dismissal driven by improper considerations…I understand my duty as a prosecutor to mean enforcing the law impartially, and that includes prosecuting a validly returned indictment regardless whether its dismissal would be politically advantageous, to the defendant or to those who appointed me.

Sassoon wrote that she remains "baffled by the rushed and superficial process by which this decision was reached, in seeming collaboration with Adams's counsel and without my direct input," and offered her resignation if Bondi would be unwilling to reconsider the order to dismiss the charges.

On Feb. 13, Bove responded to Sassoon's letter to Bondi. In response to what Bove called Sassoon's "refusal to comply with my instruction to dismiss the prosecution of Mayor Eric Adams," the acting deputy attorney general notified Sassoon that her resignation is accepted based on her "choice to continue pursuing a politically motivated prosecution despite an express instruction to dismiss the case." Bove also notified Sassoon that the assistant U.S. attorneys on her prosecution team supportive of her approach and unwilling to comply with the order to dismiss the case "are being placed on off-duty, administrative leave pending investigations by the Office of the Attorney General and the Office of Professional Responsibility." And third, the letter notified Sassoon that the prosecution of Mayor Adams is transferred to the Justice Department, which intends to file a motion to dismiss.

Read the Feb. 10 Justice Department memo to drop charges here or below:

**DOJ Memo to Drop Adams Charges**

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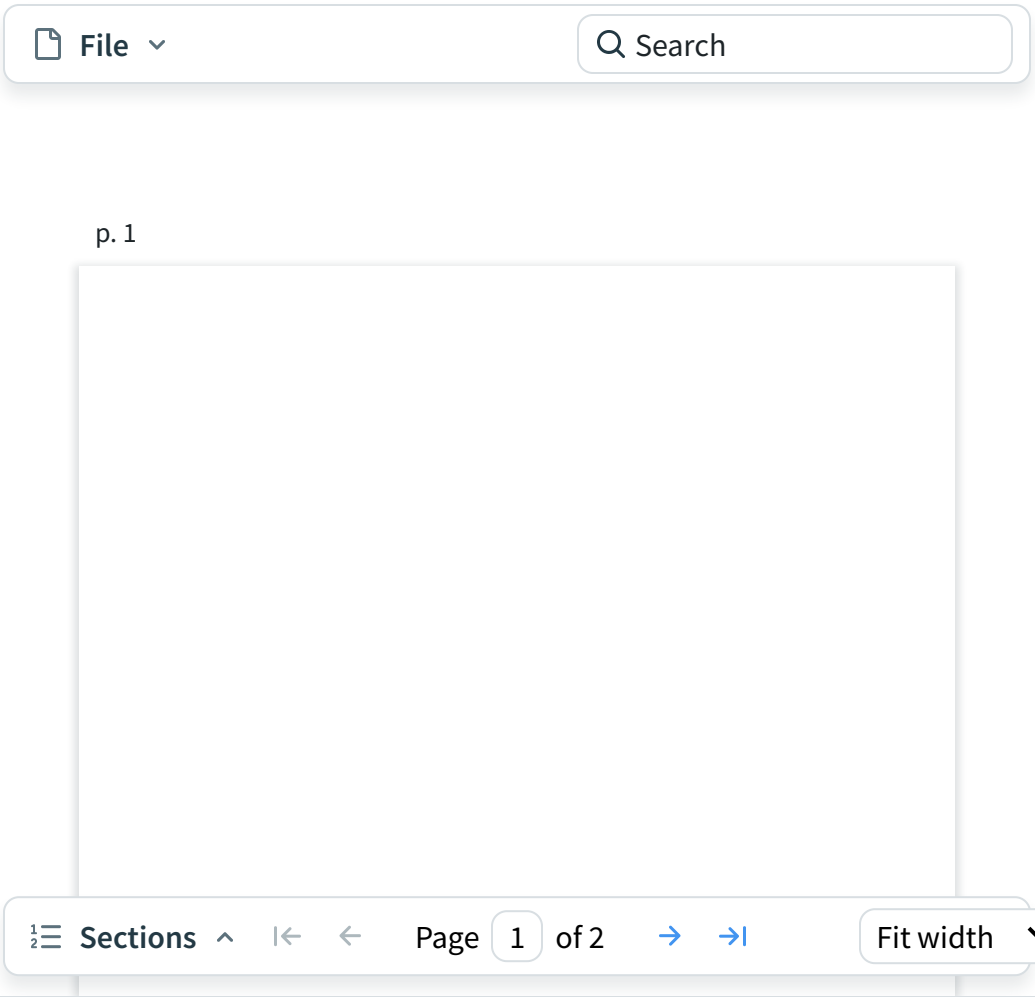
Tyler McBrien (The Lawfare Institute)




Read Sassoon's Feb. 12 letter to Bondi here or below:

**Sassoon Bondi Letter**

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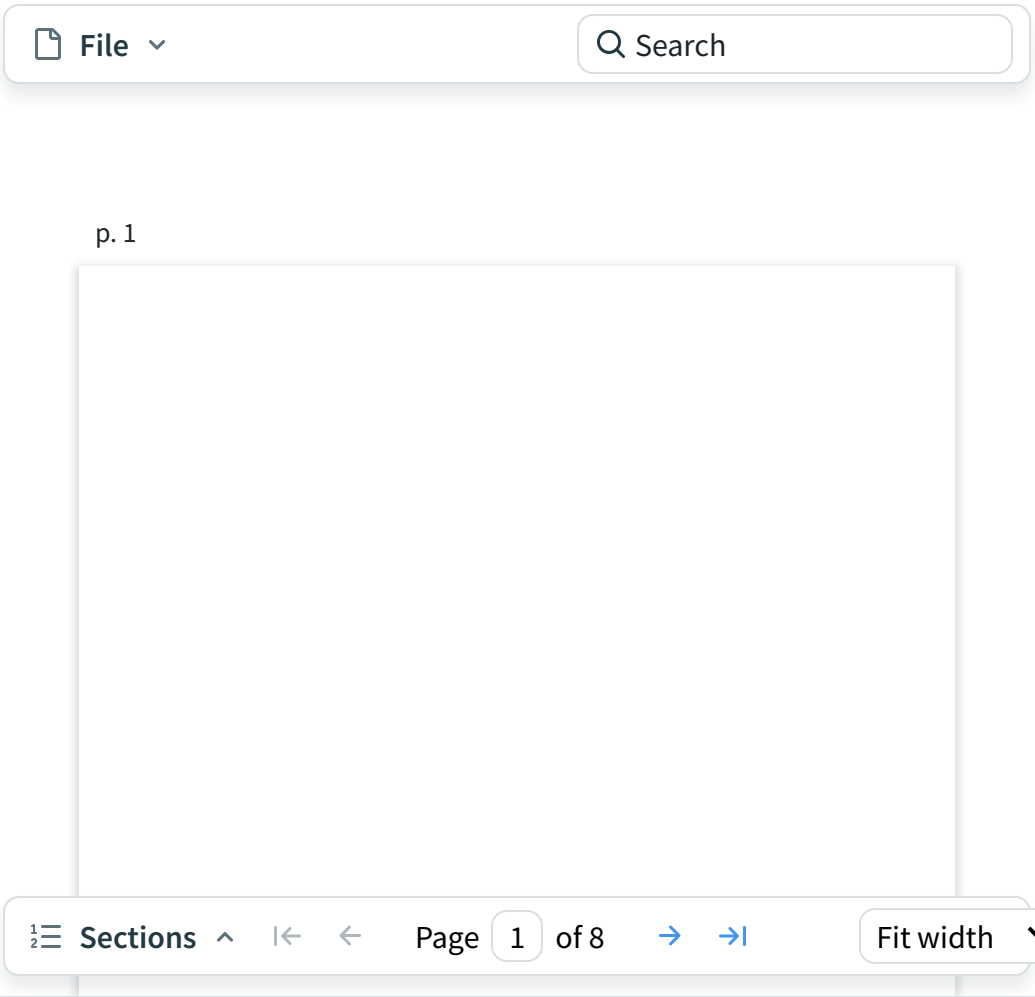


Read Bove's Feb. 13 letter to Sassoon here or below:

**Bove Response to Sassoon Resignation-full**

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Tyler McBrien is the managing editor of *Lawfare*. He previously worked as an editor with the Council on Foreign Relations and a Princeton in Africa Fellow with Equal Education in South Africa, and holds an MA in international relations from the University of Chicago.

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